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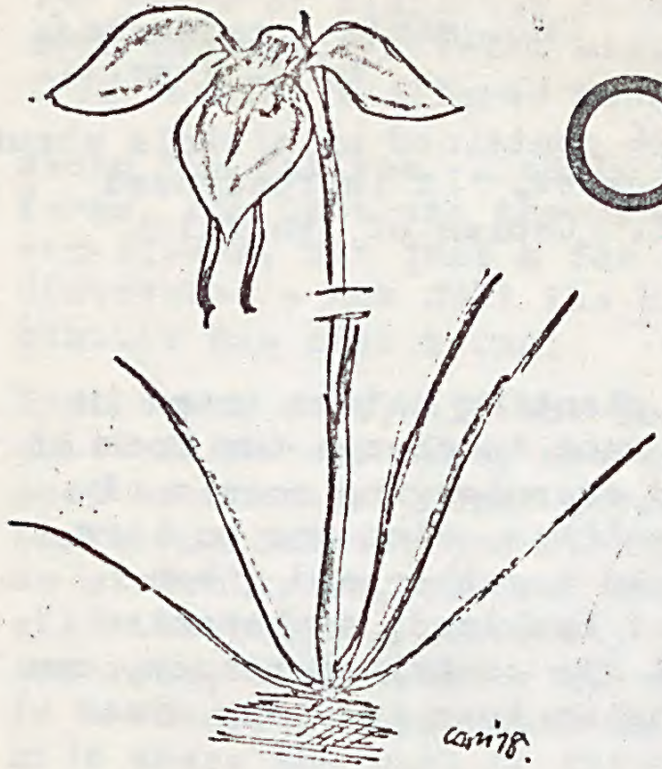
Castlemaine naturalist

OCTOBER 1978



President: Mrs R. Mills.
Min. Sec : Mrs B. Singleton.
Gen. Sec : Mr M. Winterbottom.
Treasurer: Mr L. Bransgrove.
Newsletter: Mr E. Perkins.

General meetings are held at the Castlemaine Education Centre (SEC building, Mostyn St) at 8 p.m on the second Friday of each month. Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the Club's sessions. Excursion details are on the rear page.

Plants of the Castlemaine Area Number 13 of a series.

A NEW PLANT RECORD FOR THE DISTRICT

Zaluzianskya divaricata

16/9/78 Maldon

Specimens of SPREADING NIGHT-PHLOX have been found growing on Nuggetty Range (just north of Maldon). This is a new record for the district. Willis in 'Plants in Victoria' lists it as restricted to the Dimboola district.

It is easily recognised by the yellow and orange flowers with long tubes. The leaves are toothed and woolly. The lower leaves are stalked and in opposite pairs. The upper leaves are almost stalkless and single.

The Scientific name is Zaluzianskia divaricata, named after Dr. Adam Zaluzianski.
Divaricata means widely spreading apart.

Spreading Night-phlox is a native of South Africa.

Reference: Black, "Flora of South Australia" part 4, page 1097.

E.P.

STREET TREES

One man's preference,
by J. Newell.

(The Castlemaine Naturalist number 26 contained an article about about street trees. Here is another view. It is condensed from an longer article by Sam Newell. Copies of the full text are available on request.)

Let us be a bit more specific about planting native trees in Castlemaine. Personally I wouldn't want to change the look of the town too much. It is a rich and everchanging mosaic of local and imported trees: gums and wattles, elms and poplars, pines, plums and dozens of others held together and given character by its ribs and backbone of bushland; a character which Canberra for instance, for all its contrived beauty, can never achieve, and which many a Victorian town has long since lost.

It is true that many of Castlemaine's street trees are a weary mess, reduced to scraggy diseased dishmops by generations of unwise placing, unfeeling butchery and general mismanagement, but there are many beautiful stands of exotics to cherish still, both in the streets and parks, and in private gardens - the solid greens of elm and poplar changing to pale gold, the shadows of their purple or silver filagree enhancing the winter sunshine.

Other lesser known delights are the massive fine trees towering over the foot bridge in Urquhart Street, the wattles in Turner and Hargreaves Streets, the halo of Old Man's Beard on Berberis in Doveton Street, and of course the Viburnums and Magnolia grandifloras go on and on unchanged through generations of man; or could anyone driving by who has seen the close-cropped apple trees in full flourish beneath the prison walls, with three fat lambs grazing, ever want to live far from Castlemaine?

Within this framework there is much to be done, and all of us can contribute.

My own preference would be to replace gradually the most severely diseased plane trees with native shrubs suited to their situation, but to plant also at least one avenue of planes where they can be allowed unlimited height and spread for the next hundred years or so.

Among Australian trees I would like to give preference to those native to this area. Their strong character makes the district what it is, and forms the warp of the whole design. Even after

130 years of slaughter these trees still distinguish one gully from another, gravelly hill-top from ironstone ridge, shale from basalt, sheltered aspect from exposed.

Among the natives, I would not plant too many of the abnormal forms, for instance the pink-flowered yellow gum or the double wax-flower, but just a few of them as special surprises to be discovered - how dull the birthday party tea where every biscuit has pink icing!

That being said, all the local trees, and there are twenty quite different ones, are suitable for street planting in one spot or another. Some people may feel that the Long-leaf Box, White Box and the Red Stringybark are a bit too scraggy looking as street trees, and the first mentioned a little too prone to shed its boughs. This may be true of single specimens in serried rows, buta cluster of any of these would be very suitable in a road junction where cars will not be parked, or on a road side where the bush is thinning out.

RedGum thrive along drainage lines, including many now wetter spots where it did not grow before. It can grow straight and tall if planted closely as a forest tree. Many of the smaller gullies without creeks certainly carried Red-gum before mining started, while on some creeks there was not a tree small enough to cut down!

Yellow Gum thrives on many of the smaller alluvial flats as a magnificant forest tree, where it is often wrongly called Ghost Gum. In harsh stony conditions the twisted seedlings and suckers are more weird even than the Grey Box growing with them. Big or small, seedlings or suckers, they are lovely trees.

No one ever plants Grey Box. The flower is small and creamy (not pink) and the leaves always chewed by insects and distorted by galls, but it forms a mighty spreading park tree, safe but possible to climb, or towers straight up to 20 metres or so with close company in reasonable soil. Many Grey Box in this district have an immense woody tuber at ground level, up to three times the diameter of the trunk - an added wonder of interest for young and old.

Narrow-leaf Peppermint and Red Box are like Grey Box in many ways, but not so chewed by insects, and their canopies are usually denser.

Yellow Box, although so variable, must be everyone's favourite. It used to thrive on the high gravels if water was not too deep nor the hard pan too continuous. Some would demur at the poss-

ibility of it shedding giant limbs, but I guess that there is more risk of death from one ride in a motor car than from walking all day and sleeping all night under any tree.

Four wattles of tree size are Black Wattle, a useful dense shady tree, and Lightwood, with Silver Wattle and Blackwood in the wetter gullies. Suitable spots can be found for them all as street or park trees, but my own preference is for the Silver Wattle and Blackwood, the first for its grace, softness and delicate colouring. Hasten the time when it again lines a rejuvenated Forest Creek at Wesley Hill!
Single or clustered, Blackwoods give that strong dark contrast now so rare in the bush from which Blackwood has disappeared.

She-oak is another which has suffered greatly though there are several patches of poor specimens surviving between Muckleford and Walmer. As a single specimen it may thrive, but its haunting character is lost. A big group of she-oaks, widely and irregularly spaced, preferably on rising ground, can be quite remarkable. Surely no child who has experienced such a group crooning and sighing on the calmest of days can ever again be unaware of a mysterious sadness in its joy. Perhaps we never become fully human without that sort of experience. There is no excuse for not making it possible for the future children of Castlemaine. Just two or three groups of she-oaks suitably placed would be enough.

That leaves only the wild cherry. I'm never quite at home with this unlikely-looking local identity. It may have its place in a cluster of box in some divided road, or in one mercifully unmade and still meandering, but perhaps it is best left as a special interest in the bush itself. #

A TRIP TO WESTERN QUEENSLAND

T and B Collins. June '78

Cats in the Wild

Many were seen right out in the bush away from the homesteads, in fact up to 40 kilometres from the nearest habitation.
Some pig shooters stated that they had seen dozens
One local radio station quoted that a party that had just crossed the Simpson Desert had counted 17 cats, and also that a cat had been caught in northern South Australia which weighed 12.5 kilograms. An ordinary cat weighs approximately 4 kilograms!

Kangaroos

We did not notice them in plague proportions as stated in the quest to have the United States lift its embargo on the import of skins. We feel that the main thinking of the landholders is that anything that eats herbage in competition in competition to their stock is a pest to be exterminated. However, the motor vehicle does more than its share in the massacre. Some roads are littered with the bodies of all kinds of animals, including large and very small types of wallaby. And local shooters account for many in the name of "sport".

Wild Pigs

These were evident in many places so we suspect that in from the roads they would be numerous. One animal we spotted was so large that we thought it to be a black calf until we were close enough to see the large curved tusks. There seems to be plenty of shooters to cope with these; but the shooters have a bad habit of pursuing their quarry across country and then bringing the carcase back to the roadside as a trophy, which makes a smell that can be felt for yards around. Also the shooters have a great delight in rendering any signpost unreadable with bullet holes - there is a rather irresponsible element among them.

Birds

Bird life is plentiful, mainly along the river and creek channels where eucalypts grow; although some smaller birds seem to like the dry scrub. In fact we found that if we saw the very popular Black and White Flycatcher (Willy Wag Tail to some) we could guess that a bore or a windmill was somewhere around. We saw our share of Emus with many half grown chicks. One fully grown bird had five chicks with her. Whether they were all hers is another question.

Brolgas were very scarce but Brown Hawks were in their hundreds living off the carcases along the roads. Crows were not so numerous. Many varied kinds of parrots were seen with quite varied colours. The many large flocks of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos were very spectacular in flight with their bright red spots under tail and wings showing, but what noisy creatures. Some hundred landed in a tree alonside our camp late in the evening. The noise was such that I had to chase them away. The usual large flocks of Galahs and Ibis were noted. There were many Pelicans in quite odd spots; on a dam, or small hole in a creek.

Other

With the unusual rains there will be a great display of flowers. The various wattles were ready to burst and many other unidentified shrubs were just finishing. I am afraid that where stock graze there seems to be little chance of new Eucalypts and native pines coming along. This is changing the environment quite a lot. Shrubs and trees that stock do not like are in abundance and of the others only large mature plants survive. This is very noticable in some parts where the roads are fenced and wide. Here the trees and shrubs are in profusion but over in the paddocks only the odd specimens can be seen.

Carnarvon National Park

This is a must for nature lovers as it embraces the Carnarvon Gorge with all its spectacular cliffs and freak chasms. The vegetation is so varied; palms and gums are growing together and all gives the feeling that time has stood still.
The facilities for campers are marvellous and all you need is the Ranger's permission, to have a few days of lovely sight-seeing.
In all of Queensland's National Parks the rangers do a great job and are eager to assist.
Carnarvon National Park is in Central Queensland between Roma and Emerald.

(Other Club Members travelling in Victoria or interstate are invited to write out an account of the Natural History of the areas that they visit.)

The Land Conservation Council

THE NORTH - CENTRAL (CASTLEMAINE) AREA REPORT

The Land Conservation Council Report for our district is due to be published early in October, so members should be alert for the advertisement in the Castlemaine Mail announcing this.

The publication of the report will be one of the most important events in the history of Castlemaine

The report will describe the features of public land in the district and will give details of geology, soil, rainfall, plants, animals etc and suggest possible future use of the land. As well, individuals and groups will be invited to make submissions on the way in which the public land should be used. For example, that the Muckleford Forest be subdivided and sold, or cleared for pines, or remain as native forest, or become a national park etc.

We can expect 60 days in which to make submissions. The LCC will consider the submissions and make its recommendations, and a copy of these will be sent to all who made submissions. There will then be a further 60 days to comment on the recommendations. The LCC will consider these and make its final recommendations. The Government will then decide whether or not to accept and implement the recommendations. Generally, the recommendations made for other areas have been completely accepted by the Government.

HINTS ON MAKING YOUR SUBMISSION TO THE LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

Give your name and address (so that you can get a copy of the L.C.C. recommendations)
You need not make recommendations for the whole area. Most people confine their recommendations to the areas that they know well.
Use maps (supplied with the report) if possible.
Give your reasons for your suggestions. This helps to build up a case and gives credibility to your suggestions.
Use subheadings, so that your submission is easy to follow and so that those reading it can extract information readily.
It is not a popularity contest or some kind of ballot. Your own submission giving your own feelings is likely to be more effective than a straight copy of someone elses version .
Notice is taken of all submissions, so it is certainly worthwhile for everyone to make a submission.

THE SECOND ANNUAL SHOW-DAY WALK

This year the walk was across country from Taradale to Fryerstown, and proved to be easier than last year's walk home from the tunnel via The Monk.
A plant list was made, and a copy of it is available to members on request. However, perhaps more interesting were the plants not seen. For example, we did not see a single specimen of a Bitter-pea or Spreading Wattle and both Coffee Bush and Golden Wattle were seen only rarely.

A walk home from Maldon via the railway line has been suggested for next year's walk. If there was enough support, we could consider changing the date to Grand Final Day.

EXCURSION TO KALIMNA NORTH - GRAND FINAL DAY

This was a most enjoyable excursion, with two new records for Kalimna park. The more exciting of these was the sighting of a pair of Rainbow Birds, the less exciting was the addition of Chick Weed to the plant list. Thanks to Cameron Singleton for his leadership and making it such a good afternoon.

MEETINGS

October meeting Fri Oct 13
Some minerals from Southern Queensland. Speaker is Mr G. Sbeghen.

November Meeting Friday Nov 10
Mini-Photoflora. This is a program of nature slides accepted for the Photoflora competions, and provided by the Native Plants Preservation Society.

December Meeting Friday Dec 8th
Speaker will be Dr Moulds.
Dr Moulds has recently retired from his position as Director of the Forests Commission.

January In recess.

February Meeting Friday Feb 9th
Annual meeting.

EXCURSIONS - Continued

Sunday Nov 19th Bushwalk in the Vaughan Area, a sequel to last year's walk. Leave Ed Centre at 10.30 a.m. Leader: Mr Bradfield.

Saturday Nov 9th Drummond Nth
A visit to the plantation. Leave the Ed. Centre at 1.30 p.m.

BIRD SURVEY

The Royal Australian Ornithologists Union is conducting a survey of birds. Members interested in assisting are asked to let Mrs Mills know.

CLUB EMBLEM

We still do not have a club emblem We need something particularly related to Castlemaine.
Can you think of a suitable emblem?
The orchid on page 1, Diuris pedunculata, was drawn by Cameron Singleton.

EXCURSIONS

Sunday Oct 15 Lerderderg Gorge
There will be a moderate walk in the Gorge area. Meet at the Blackwood Post Office at 11.00 a.m Leader is Mr W. Murphy of the Ballarat FNC. Bring a barbeque lunch.

Sat&Sun Oct 21-22 Snake Valley
This is a Western Vic. Field Naturalists' Club Association camp-out arranged by the Ballarat FNC. Snake Valley is near Linton. Details from Mrs Mills or Mr Winterbottom.

Sat October 28 Taradale
Leave the Education Centre at 1.30 p.m. Leader is Mrs Mills.

Sat Nov 4th Kaweka Tours
At 11.00 and 3.00 from the Turner St Entrance

Sun Nov 5th Kaweka Tours
At 11.00 and 3.00 from the Turner St Entrance.

Sun Nov 5th Muckleford
Bus tour to Muckleford Forest, in association with the Castlemaine Festival. Leave Market Square at 1.30 p.m. Fares $1.50 adult, 50 ¢ children. Leader is Mr Winterbottom.

Tuesday Nov 7th Kaweka Tours
At 11.00 and 3.00 pm, from the Turner St entrance.

Saturday Nov 11 Kaweka Tours
At 11.00 and 3.00 pm, from the Turner St Entrance.

Saturday Nov 11 Vaughan/Fryerstown
Bus tour to above areas; geological-historical. Leaves the Market Square at 1.30 pm. Fare $1.50 and 50 ¢. Leaders: Mr Bradfield and Mr Perkins.